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SUBJECT: ENGLISH SYNOPSIS OF NICARAGUAN ARMS CONTROL PROPOSAL

REF: A. MANAGUA 2274

[B. TEGUCIGALPA 2022](#)

[C. MANAGUA 2575](#)

[D. MANAGUA 2585](#)

[E. SECSTATE 249219](#)

[F. MANAGUA 2659](#)

[G. USDAO TEGUCIGALPA 041716Z SEP 03](#)

[H. TEGUCIGALPA 2380](#)

[¶1. Below is an informal translation of the substantive parts of the Nicaraguan arms control proposal of July 2003, formally titled "The Program to Limit and Control Arms in Central America to Achieve a Reasonable Balance of Forces and Foster Stability, Mutual Confidence, and Transparency" \(ref A\). Post reported in refs G and H the Honduran response to the Nicaraguan proposal.](#)

Synopsis of Nicaraguan Arms Control Proposal

[¶2. Objectives:](#)

The document represents a formal proposal by the Government of Nicaragua to limit and control armaments in Central America to achieve a reasonable balance of forces and establish mutual confidence, transparency, and institutionalize civilian control of the military. The Nicaraguan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defense, and other government ministries that handle national defense issues endorsed the document. It was signed on July 16, 2003.

The Process

Reasonable Balance of Forces

- Outline national reasonable balance of forces
- OAS concurrence given potential national and regional threats
- Presenting national arms inventories to SICA according to the format approved by the Council of Foreign Ministers (Aug 6, 2003)
- Format and define the inventories of the public security institutions (Aug 6, 2003)
- Present the arms inventories of the public security institutions
- Establish maximum limits for national armed forces

Arms Control

- Establish a mechanism to verify, limit, and control arms inventories in each country and at the regional level. Also develop ways to secure arsenals against theft and proliferation. This can be accomplished by state entities working with the OAS. (Proposed time-line: Three months for creation of state entities; six months for regional organization)
- Determine a process to destroy, transfer, or securely store excess arms in concordance with national laws and international treaty obligations.
- Determine prohibited offensive weapons that are destabilizing to the region
- Establish a moratorium on the acquisition of new offensive weapons
- Proceed with the gradual and progressive destruction of arms that are determined to be prohibited
- Implement a standardized methodology to track national defense spending (done through the UN or the OAS)
- Destruction of seized arms from illicit activities that fall outside of the agreed upon regional balance of forces
- Establish a uniform national registry for explosives

Modernization and Professionalization

- Continue the modernization and professionalization of

military and public security forces, taking into account national law, traditional and non-traditional threats, while also focusing on humanitarian aid and response to natural disasters

Other Confidence Building Measures

- Strengthen the mechanisms for peaceful resolution of conflicts in the Treaty on Democratic Security in Central America
- Develop a regional code of ethics for transparency in the transfer of arms
- Pass national laws for the control of arms with the overall objective of reaching a standardization of such regulations
- Ratify, or speed up the implementation of, the following international treaties regarding arms control:
 - Treaty on Democratic Security in Central America;
 - United Nations Registry of Conventional Arms;
 - Standard Report on Military Expenditures;
 - Inter-American Convention Against the Fabrication and Trafficking in Illicit Firearms, Munitions, Explosives, and Other Related Material;
 - Inter-American Convention for the Transparency in the Acquisition of Conventional Arms;
 - Model Regulations for the International Control of Firearms, Components, and Munitions from the Inter-American Convention to Control Drug Abuse;
 - 1972 Convention against the Development, Production, or Storage of Biological or Toxic Weapons and for Their Destruction;
 - 1993 Convention against the Development, Production, Storage, or Use of Chemical Weapons and for Their Destruction;
 - The last two Protocols of the 1980 Convention Regarding Prohibitions and Restrictions Against the Deployment of Certain Conventional Arms Considered Excessively Harmful or Indiscriminate;
 - 1997 Convention Against the Use, Storage, Production, or Transfer or Anti-Personnel Mines and for Their Destruction.

Implementation

- The Central American Council on Security (SICA) and its relevant subcommittees would oversee the implementation of this agreement.
- For Implementation: Ministry's of Foreign Relations, Defense, Government and Security in conjunction with Chief of the military and police.
- For Compliance: The above-mentioned body will have the support of SICA with the General Secretary of SICA acting as a permanent officer for the Council.

Annex I

Foundation and References

- Reaffirms the principles and agreements of the Treaty on Democratic Security in Central America, particularly those established in Title III
- Reaffirms the international rights established in the United Nations Charter and the Organization of American States
- Affirms the decisions established by the Presidents, Council of Foreign Ministers, and SICA in their February 19, 2003 Communiqu adopting the model format for arms inventories
- Refers to the Declaration of the Fifth Conference of Defense Ministers of the Americas in Santiago, Chile 18-22 November 2002 in reference to transparency in the acquisition of weapons and defense budgets.

Annex II

Glossary

Legal Framework for Arms Control Agreement

The legal framework for this agreement is laid out in the Treaty on Democratic Security in Central America which obligates each party to the Agreement to deploy armed forces in a balanced and reasonable manner for the establishment of peaceful, democratic, and prosperous atmosphere in the region.

-----Reasonable Balance of Forces

A reasonable balance of forces for each country depends on the necessities of each state to confront threats to the national interest and the ability to economically sustain them.

-----Maximum Force Levels

During the process of reaching reasonable balanced forces each state will define its necessary force levels to confront potential threats. In some cases this could lead states to determine that their current force structure is insufficient and that in the short term augmentation is necessary. However, this would need to proceed with caution so as not to be perceived as seeking offensive weapons or skewing the military equilibrium. The idea of collective defense should be kept in mind when analyzing transnational threats.

-----Moratorium

To establish a moratorium on the acquisition of newly classified offensive weapons it is understood that the modernization of the armed forces to replace obsolete equipment and allow for regional interoperability is allowed within the confines of lawful activity and potential threats each state faces.

-----Offensive Arms

Offensive arms are defined as any weapons (sea, air, land) that could constitute a possible threat, could be considered destabilizing, or could throw off regional equilibrium.

-----Surplus Arms

It is up to each country to determine appropriate force levels as long as they are not in violation off international treaties.

13. Annex III of the proposed agreement gives detailed descriptions of the following parameters, which serve to guide the work on these issues:

Constitutional and Judicial Aspects;
Considerations in Determining Necessary Force Levels for Each State;
Planning of Optional Force Levels;
Implementing of a Reasonable Balance of Forces System;
Sustainability of a Reasonable Balance of Forces System;
Proposed Methodology and Development of a Reasonable Balance of Forces System.

Palmer